



Connecting

Creating A New Mental Health Service Delivery System for Our City

October 2004

Vol. 2 No. 14

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Vote, please!

November 2 is election day. During the summer, more than 100 consumers became registered voters and I congratulate you. I urge every registered voter to exercise your rights as a citizen and vote.

Flu Vaccine Shortage

Gregg A. Pane, M.D., Acting Director of the DC Department of Health, issued an Emergency Rule mandating that available influenza vaccine held by District health care providers be used for priority groups only. MHRS providers and CRF operators should follow these guidelines.

This emergency rule will enable the District to more effectively follow the CDC recommendations that any available flu vaccine goes only to those who need it most, including the very young, the elderly, those with chronic medical conditions, and medical personnel who work directly with patients. It will ensure that we direct all available vaccine to our most vulnerable populations who have the highest risk for.

New St. Elizabeths Building Clears Zoning

Two critical hurdles were cleared recently to bring us closer than ever to the reality of a new, state-of-the-art St. Elizabeths Hospital building. The Certificate of Need was issued in September and this month the Zoning Commission approved the final design and construction plans.

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DMH ENGAGES IN BIWEEKLY CONSUMER DIALOGUE; OPEN FORUM PROVIDES COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

DMH has started a biweekly dialogue with consumers October 25, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., at the DC Community Services Agency, 3rd floor conference room, 1250 U Street, NW. The dialogue was with Frances Priester, Director of the DMH Office of Consumer and Family Affairs, and Linda Kaufman, Office of Programs and Policy Director of Adult Services.

Upcoming scheduled dialogue dates and times are November 8, November 22, December 6 and December 20, all meetings are from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The DCCSA sits on top of the U Street/Cardozo Metrorail station on the Green Line.

This biweekly series of conversations will provide another means of direct communication with consumers to learn their concerns, answer questions and strengthen consumers' understanding of their rights. Additionally, these conversations will allow DMH to share information about its programs, policies, processes and personnel.

"So much has happened since we became the Department of Mental Health three years ago and communicating directly with consumers and their families is critical to keeping up the momentum to improve the mental health system," said DMH Director Martha B. Knisley.

"Most important is our growth from 6,000 to almost 19,000 enrolled consumers. We have certified 20 Core Service Agencies and seven specialty providers and subproviders to deliver Mental Health Rehabilitation Services," she added. "Such a substantial expansion of our system must be accompanied by more opportunities for direct communication between DMH and consumers so that people can weigh in on the issues and everyone stays informed."

Earlier this month, more than 100 consumers attended an open forum on housing and Day Services, sponsored by McClendon Center. Ms. Priester; Ella Thomas, DMH Deputy Director of the Office of Programs and Policy; and Edith Makenta, OPP Director of Housing, engaged in a lively discussion of these issues. In fact, the forum was so successful, another forum is planned for Monday, November 29, 10:30 a.m. at the McClendon Center, located at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, 1313 New York Avenue, NW.

"Communication is at the core of assisting consumers with their recovery," said Director Knisley.

AND THE WINNER IS . . .



Walkers assemble to begin their race

The 11th Annual Race for Mental Health was the biggest ever, attracting more than 100 runners and walkers to the event sponsored by the DC Community Services Agency and its Advisory Board Collaborative. Men, women and children of all ages crossed the finish line after either running 5 kilometers (5K=3.1 miles) or walking one mile.

John McKenzie, of Silver Spring, Md., came in first in the 5K run, finishing in 20:08 minutes and winning \$25 for his effort. He was followed closely by Pete Beauregard, of Norwood, Mass., at 20:14 and Washington, DC twins Erin Conroy at 20:19 and Tara Conroy at 21:05. Erin won \$25 as the first woman runner to finish.

First place in the 1-mile walk, and the \$25 prize, went to Whitney Watriss, a member of the Northwest Child and Family Center Advisory Board, finished in 11:55. Kinana Woodridge (granddaughter of Rev. Joachim Woodridge, chair of the North Community Mental Health Center Advisory Board, was second coming in at 12:19 and Philip Lucas, chair of the Northwest Child and Family Community Support Advisory Council, came in third at 12:30 and won \$25 as the first male to finish.

Just about every one of the 59 runners and 46 walkers who finished got a prize. Jay Wind, race consultant, wrote for the Sun Gazette, "Age group winners won tote bags, water bottles, and 'DC in '05' t-shirts, donated by Major League Baseball; and every participant's goodie bag contained Nolan Ryan's guide to fitness, courtesy of the President's Council on Physical Fitness, and women's goodie bags included another insert from Instead Softcup. [Radio station] HOT 99.5 played music and provided the sound system, Runners World donated PowerBars, Somerset School 8K donated water bottles, DrinkMore Water provided their top-of-the-line product, and Safeway donated apples, yogurt, and (true to the theme) hot dogs and buns."

DMH Director Martha B. Knisley and DCCSA CEO Juanita Price greeted the racers and joined the competitors in an warm-up routine led by Carolyn Woodridge. "The weather was perfect for racing - cool, crisp, sunny and dry," said Ms. Price. "Every section of DMH was represented and we had a team from Green Door," said Director Knisley.

These DMH employees raced for mental health: **DCCSA - Michael Biernoff, Quiona Chambers, Folajomi Ijiti, Brendolyn McCarty-Jones, Pamela Moore, Patricia M. Morris, Juanita Price, Linda Roe, Regina Scott, and Yvonne Stearns; SEH - Kathy Coleman, Janet Crowe, Kyrone Davis, Linda Evans, Michael Gardner, Brenda Johnson, Cheryl Moore, Gary Proctor, and Winslow Woodlawn; MHA - Nicole Abramson, Linda Grant and Carleen Joseph.**



Green Door Honored for Services and Facilities

Green Door has been honored for the effectiveness of its services and the quality of its facilities.

The Northern Virginia Chapter of the American Institute of Architects presented a 2004 Excellence Award – the highest design award given by the chapter—to Green Door on Taylor Street, which opened last November. Transformed from an old warehouse into a people-friendly environment, the new home of Green Door's Core Service Agency contains day services; psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and social workers; up to 64 case managers; and counseling rooms and meeting space for a variety of support groups.

According to Judith Johnson, President & CEO of Green Door, "Green Door on Taylor Street exemplifies the Green Door values of community, respect, and dignity. Large perimeter windows and central skylights fill the space with natural light. The old loading dock has become a lively, day lit reception area with a fish pond and waterfall. A café, run by members, welcomes guests and offers refreshments to those waiting for appointments. The use of color and art throughout the building makes the statement that Green Door on Taylor Street values mental health consumers."

The incorporation of sustainable *green* design concepts was central to the renovation of the facility. Green Door sought a healthful environment for clients and staff, as well as a space that reflected environmental sensitivities and would ultimately minimize operating costs through energy-efficient design.

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Welcome New Employees

Michael Biernoff, DCCSA
Supervisory Medical Officer

Oran Gan, MHA Mental Health
Specialist

Barbara Parks, MHA
Supervisory Social Worker

Zettie Page, MHA Director
Quality Improvement

Shauna Spencer, MHA Director of
Community & Crisis Response

Meghan Sullivan, MHA
Clinical Psychologist

Patricia Valentine, MHA
Program Assistant

Carroll Ward, MHA Quality
Improvement Health Safety
Specialist

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Green Door

The D.C. Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers presented its Agency of the Year Award to Green Door for its work with mental health consumers, outstanding advocacy for the rights of persons with mental illness, and leadership in the mental health community. Joyce A. Higashi, LICSW, DCSW, Executive Director of the DC Metro Chapter, said, "Creating a spacious, colorful, and live environment for clients and staff fosters a welcoming atmosphere that supports the growth of trust and self-respect – without the utterance of a single word. It allows clients and staff to meet on more equal terms and the playfulness of the colorful environment suggests that happiness is within the reach of everyone."

The Green Door Clubhouse will host a Rock The Green Door Vote! Party on November 2, as part of its 2004 voter registration drive. (More than 75% of members are registered.) On election day, members with an "I Voted" badge will enjoy a free lunch, exclusive access to a VIP Voters Lounge, and a chance to win a raffle prize at the party.

DMH Outreach to Faith-Based Community

The Mayor's Interfaith Council of the District of Columbia was very interested in learning about the mental health services in and around the city at its October meeting. During the 15-minute presentation before the interdenominational group, **St. Elizabeths Hospital Chaplin Rev. Vickie Cowell and Assistant Chaplin Rev. James Coates** provided the city's spiritual leaders with an overview of the stigma of mental illness and how to integrate theology with spirituality.

Rev. Cowell asked the participants if they could recall an occasion when someone walked into their church who didn't look well or smell good. She asked that the faith community embrace people like this and help them to get help.

Rev. Cowell asked faith leaders to really think about what they say to persons suffering with mentally illness. She referred to Mark 9:47 that says, "And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Although the spiritual message may be well intended, a severely mentally ill person may interpret this to be literal request.

The council members were also interested in learning about crisis intervention services and community-based residential facilities. A member asked who should be contacted if it appears that there may be a problem in a residential facility. The Access HelpLine cards as well as other DMH materials were provided to the 35 members. Also, **Public Affairs Specialist Gina Douglas** gave a general overview of the Mental Health Rehabilitation Services system.

The Mayor's Interfaith Council advises Dr. Susan Newman the Mayor's Senior Advisor for Religious Affairs, and the cabinet, on matters that affect the spiritual, faith and religious well being of all DC residents. The 21 council members represent various faith traditions including Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Muslim, Catholic, Buddhist, Christian Scientist, Scientology, and the United Church of Christ.

DMH Wins \$1.5 Million in 3 New Grants

DMH recently won three new grants totaling more than \$1.5 million. The three-year \$812,004 grant for "Integrating Long Term Supports with Affordable Housing" from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for affordable housing, including homeownership, for people in the mental health and mental retardation systems. DMH is working with the Department of Human Services Mental Retardation and Developmental Disability Administration.

The \$499,649 CMS grant for "Supporting Transitions for EPSDT Eligible Children in Foster Care with Mental Health Disorders" will assist DMH and the Child and Family

Services Agency to review regulations and operations for Medicaid-funded mental health services to improve service coordination and ensure that as foster care children with mental health disorders age-out of the system, they continue to access the services they need.

The third grant is for \$142,200 grant to support development of its information system to incorporate federally-required reporting data and performance indicator data and to establish a data warehouse mechanism. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration grant will allow the District to accomplish federal mandates associated with its State Mental Health Block Grant reporting requirements.

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Director's Message

We also solidified our partnership with ANC 8C through a Memorandum of Understanding that explores creating internships and apprenticeships for Ward 8 residents." The MOU also addresses assuring that Ward 8 businesses are fully aware of opportunities. The next step is the first phase of construction, the site work (road and utilities). Additionally, the MOU sets communication goals to ensure residents are knowledgeable of the project.

The Season of Giving is Coming

Not long from now, all DMH employees will be approached to donate to the One Fund, the District's annual giving program to support non-profit agencies, educational organizations and other groups whose mission is improving people's lives.

Vicki Whitfield, of the MHA Office of Accountability, is this year's DMH representative to the One Fund. She and other DMH employees will provide information about these very worthy organizations and ask you to be generous in your contributions.

I urge you to consider becoming a Fair Share giver this year by committing just one percent of your gross salary to any of the One Fund programs. This is a painless means of truly helping agencies that depend on public giving to sustain them, and your contribution is handled through payroll deduction. Of course, any amount of you give will be appreciated.

DMH/CFSA Foster Care Initiative

Three providers – Youth Villages, Lester A. Drenk Behavioral Health Center and DC-based First Home Care – are on board to take children's services to a higher level by offering evidence-based services starting in early 2005. This fall, District-based providers will be trained in the techniques of Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), Intensive Home and Community-based Services, and Mobile Response and Stabilization Services to help children and youth in the foster care system with the most serious needs.

We are using federal funds to create this new infrastructure of services that supports our overall objective of treating children in their homes, schools and neighborhoods. Youth Villages is a certified MST trainer and Drenk is certified as a MRSS trainer. In addition to training local mental health clinicians in these techniques, both providers will apply for certification to deliver Mental Health Rehabilitation Services.

DMH and the Child and Family Services Agency received a \$14 million federal allocation to improve the lives of children, youth and their families in the foster care system. DMH is using its \$3.9 million share of the allocation for these services and to reduce the backlog of court-ordered evaluations of the mental health needs of children in foster care. I am happy to report we achieved the reduction goal in August and the wait time has dropped from three months to less than a month for a psychiatric examination and from two months to one week for a psychological examination.

Training Conference

Supporting the Emotional Well-Being & Mental Health of Children, Youth and Families

The Department of Mental Health played a critical role in the 3rd Annual Interdisciplinary Training Conference sponsored by the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Family Court. Employees were involved in all aspects of the conference including organizing and speaking. Approximately 300 judges, lawyers, social workers, probation officers and others involved with the family court attended the October 4 training at the Washington Convention Center.

The following employees participated: **Director Martha Knisley; Heather McCabe, Office of Policy and Planning; Juan Lovelace, Training Institute; Joyce White, DC CINGS; and Jennifer Carter, Peter Danielos, Roxanne Dryden-Edwards, Michael Kronen, Kris Laurenti, C. David Missar, Mary Phillips, Karen Osterle, Susan Theut, Youth Forensic Services Division.**

Conference on Violence and Trauma Against Youth

DMH is among the sponsors of this conference to educate educators and others about the effect of violence and trauma on youth. Issues to be presented include grief and loss, trauma, risk factors, and new cutting edge interventions, including school-based programs.

The conference will be held on Thursday, November 18; all day; Kellogg Conference Center at Gallaudet University. There is a \$100 registration fee. For more information contact Margaret Pegram at 202-312-2445.



Anna was 14 years old when she came to the School Mental Health Program at a public charter school. Anna's court appointed guardian accompanied her to the initial interview and explained that Anna was in court earlier this year on an assault charge. Although Anna's mother had legal guardianship, Anna was living with her maternal grandmother and uncle whom she had attacked. They had Anna arrested and she spent one night at Oak Hill Detention Center. In court, no one in Anna's family stepped up to take custody of her, so Ms. Johnson, a friend's aunt, volunteered. Ms. Johnson indicated that she believed that Anna's uncle had sexually molested her and that this had precipitated the argument and physical altercation that ensued. Throughout the counseling, Anna denied molestation.

Within a few days of being admitted to the school, Anna began to demonstrate her difficulties. When she wasn't getting her way, she would raise her voice and ask the school staff to produce their qualifications. Academically, Anna was a strong student. Things seemed to be progressing well in her home until one night she did not come home. The next day, Anna and Ms. Johnson had a major falling out. On his own accord, the Dean of Students contacted Anna's father, Mr. Jones. The school did not know of him until Anna mentioned him. The school quickly found a place for Anna and arranged for her to spend weekends with Mr. Jones.

Once her housing was stabilized, Anna seemed to get back on track. She continued to struggle with anger/rage issues and was often asked to leave class for verbally abusing her teachers. In counseling, she made small gains. She began to recognize that she used her voice and posture to gain control of situations in which she felt out of control. Anna also began to understand that she had grown up too fast. Having lived with a mother who chronically abused drugs, Anna had to learn to fend for herself. But, now that she was being encouraged to behave age-appropriately, she couldn't manage it. She felt confused.

Soon Anna was in trouble again. She was caught with a knife in school and was expelled. The school clinician fought to allow Anna to return the following semester. Anna was told that she could return as long as she kept her counseling, wrote an essay about her poor judgment, and received testing to unearth possible emotional disabilities.

Since Anna would be out of school for two months her father was encouraged to enroll her in her neighborhood school. He did not. Anna's home life deteriorated dramatically. Her level of rage skyrocketed. Mr. Jones could not handle her. She often flew into fits of rage that spiraled down into incidents where Anna kicked holes in the walls and threatened to have Mr. Jones arrested for neglect. On one occasion, Anna threatened to hang herself. At that point she was enrolled in the Mental Health Rehabilitation Services (MHRS) system. Anna's social worker at the MHRS provider contacted her mother. Anna's mother had no real fixed address, suffered with a chronic drug addition, and could not care for Anna. The social worker counseled Anna's mother to contact Children and Family Services Administration (CFSA). Anna's mother did not. As a result, Anna was released to Mr. Jones. Anna's mother had vanished from the picture.

Anna's home life was still unstable. During a meeting with Anna, Mr. Jones and the clinician, an argument ensued between father and daughter. By the end of the session Mr. Jones refused to allow Anna back into his home. CFSA was called and Anna was put in a group home and her mother was charged with neglect. At a mediation hearing, Anna's mother agreed to the neglect charges. She later entered detox.

Anna returned to school shortly thereafter. Although she struggled with living in the group home, she began to thrive in school and participated regularly in counseling. She joined the debate team and traveled to New Jersey to represent the region. At the end of the school term, Anna was on the Dean's List and was chosen as school Ambassador. The intensity of her angry outbursts diminished and she began to forge more productive relationships with staff members. She had an easier time talking about her feelings and the thoughts and behaviors that triggered her anger. She learned how to identify indicators of stress and to use a variety of strategies to reduce anxiety. She still has a lot of growing to do, but we all recognize how far she's come. So does she!

Training Highlight

World AIDS Day DMH Event

The Down Low Phenomenon: Implications for Couples Therapy

Tuesday, November 30
8:30 am-3:00 pm A Forum

Disabled American
Veterans Auditorium
807 Maine Ave., SW

Capacity Seating: 75 participants
Session #SPE-101
CEUs will be offered

To register for this class or for more
information on training opportunities
offered by the DMH Training Institute
call 202-673-7626.

DMH Office of Chief Financial Officer

Anthony Jefferson
Budget Officer
671-3393

Joyce Jeter
Agency Fiscal Officer
673-7790

Vera Miller
Budget Analyst
671-3397

Jennifer Mumford
Accounts Payable Supervisor
671-3212

Marian Roberts
Accounts Payable Technician
671-3201

Stephanie Smith
Accounting Technician
671-3172

Frances Priester, MHA Consumer and Family Affairs, advised persons with disabilities of their rights to services during the Community-Based Forum for People with Disabilities and Their Family Members on September 18.

John Graham, DCCSA, and Linda Grant, MHA Public Affairs, were exhibitors at the Safe Shores' Conference--Safe Childhoods: Strengthening D.C.'s Clinical Response to Childhood Trauma on September 21.

Sonia Albertini, DCCSA, Gina Douglas, MHA Public Affairs, and Heather McCabe, MHA, represented DMH at the "Take Your Loved One to the Doctor Today" Health Fair at DC General Urgent Care Facility on September 21.

Alstephenos Boone, MHA Consumer and Family Affairs, and David Prince, MHA Human Resources, provided information to men attending the 100 Fathers Conference at Shiloh Baptist Church on September 22.

LaSean Atkinson, MHA Office of the Director; Gina Douglas, MHA Public Affairs; Martha Knisley, DMH Director; and Frances Priester, represented the department at the Benning Terrace "Bet You Didn't Know" Information Fair on September 25.

Jewel Braxton, DC CINGS; Leonard Higgs, Edith Makenta, and Marialice Williams, MHA Office of Programs and Policy; Beverly Maskittie, MHA School Mental Health; and Linda Roe, DCCSA, shared information with attendees during the DCHA Resident Summit at the DC Armory on September 28.

Director Martha Knisley and Richard Warsh, Facility Planning, represented DMH at the DC Zoning Commission hearing on the second part of the two-stage planning for the new building construction at St. Elizabeths Hospital on September 30.

Victoria TenEyck, DCCSA, gave a presentation on conflict resolution during the Department of Health and DC Public Schools Youth Violence Prevention conference on October 1.

Dr. Debra Mosley, DC CINGS, spoke to a women's group on "Recognizing Signs of Mental Illness in Children" on October 4.

Juanita Price, DCCSA CEO and Victoria TenEyck, DCCSA; LaSean Atkinson, Director's Office; LaVonne Evans and Patricia Porter, MHA Human Resources; represented DMH at the "Bet You Didn't Know" Information Fair in the River Terrace community on October 9.

Yvonne Smith, MHA Consumer and Family Affairs, received a scholarship to attend the 2004 Alternatives Conference in Denver on October 13-17.

DMH Director Martha Knisley, LaSean Atkinson, MHA Director's Office; Gina Douglas, Public Affairs; Wilma Harvey, DC CINGS; Frances Priester, MHA Consumer and Family Affairs, represented DMH at the "Bet You Didn't Know" Information Fair at Marie Reed Learning Center on October 16.

Gina Douglas, Public Affairs, and Velva Spriggs, DC CINGS, provided students with information on mental health careers and services at Payne Elementary School on October 20.

Paul Washington, MHA Consumer and Family Affairs, distributed information to residents in the Lincoln Road and Todd Place neighborhoods during a Ward 5 Neighborhood Core Team walk through on October 28.

What's Up DMH?

